

Message Text

SECRET

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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INFO AMEMBASSY SANAA

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AMEMBASY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMCONSUL ASMARA

CINCEUR

SECDEF

S E C R E T TEHRAN 3241

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR REFERENCE

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

SECDEF FOR ISA

FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY RUSH

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARIES SISCO AND NEWSOM

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, YS, ET, SO, IR

SUBJECT: U. S. RESPONSE TO SOVIET THRUSTS IN SOMALIA
AND ADEN

REF: SANAA 786

1. WHILE I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO MAKE A JUDGEMENT ABOUT DELIVERY
OF USG MILITARY SUPPLIES TO ETHIOPIA, I DO WISH TO EXPRESS MY
COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH THE PERCEPTIVE ANALYSIS OF AMBASSADOR
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CRAWFORD RELATING TO GENERAL SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN RED SEA, ARABIAN PENINSULA AND PERSIAN GULF. THESE ARE, AS HE STATES, TO CONTROL RED SEA TRANSIT TRAFFIC BY FIRST GAINING CONTROL OVER STRAITS OF BAB A L- MANDAB AND TO DEVELOP CAPABILITY OF DISRUPTING WESTERN ACCESS TO ARABIAN PENINSULA AND PERSIAN GULF OIL. I SEE NO OTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR WEIGHT AND PERSISTENCE OF SOVIET EFFORT IN SOUTH YEMEN, SOMALIA AND IRAQ WHICH CONTINUES AND, IN MY VIEW, WILL CONTINUE DESPITE SOVIET DRIVE TO ACHIEVE DETENTE WITH THE UNITED STATES AND THE WEST GENERALLY. THUS, HIGH PRIORITY USG IS GIVING TO STRENGTHENING NORTH YEMEN AGAINST COMMUNIST ADEN IS TO BE APPLAUDED.

2. SOVIET HAVE NO INTENTION, OF COURSE, OF USING MILITARY FORCE, EXCEPT BY PROXY, TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES. FOR TO DO SO WOULD ROUSE THE UNITED STATES AND WRECK ANY CHANCES OF ACHIEVING DETENTE WITH WEST, WHICH USSR NEEDS FOR ITS OWN PURPOSES. RATHER, SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE TO WORK, AS THEY CURRENTLY ARE DOING, TO STRENGTHEN THEIR GRIP ON IRAQ AND OTHER RADICAL ARAB STATES AND MOVEMENTS, EMPLOYING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL WEAPONS AND EXPLOITING GROWING ARAB RESENTMENT WHICH EXISTS IN CONSERVATIVE AS WELL AS RADICAL ARAB STATES, OVER U. S. FAVORITISM FOR ISRAEL IN THE ARAB/ IRAEL CONTEXT. AT SAME TIME, SOVIETS ARE BELIEVED TO RECKON THAT THEIR MACHINATIONS IN AREA UNDER DISCUSSION WILL BE REGARDED LESS SUSPICIOUSLY BY THE U. S. THAN WOULD OTHERWISE BE THE CASE BECAUSE OF SOVIET EFFORTS TO EASE TENSIONS ELSEWHERE.

3. QUESTION OF WHETHER USG WILL KEEP ITS GUARD UP IN THIS AREA DURING PERIOD OF DEVELOPING SOVIET- WESTERN DETENTE IS ONE THAT CONTINUES TO CONCERN THE SHAH OF IRAN. WITH SUSPICIONS OF SOVIET INTENTIONS BRED INTO THE VERY BONES OF MOST PERSIANS, THE SHAH FEARS THAT DETENTE IN THE WEST WILL RELEASE SOVIET ENERGIES FOR MACHINATIONS IN THIS AREA AND THAT U. S. WILL BE MORE TOLERANT OF SOVIET THRUSTS IN ARABIAN PENINSULA AND GULF REGION THAN IT OTHERWISE WOULD BE TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF IRAN AND OTHER MODERATE AREA STATES. WITHOUT NECESSARILY BUYING ALL OF THE SHAH' S FEARS, I CONSIDER SANAA REFTEL A TIMELY REMINDER THAT BASIC SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN THIS AREA REMAIN UNCHANGED AND CONTINUE TO CONSTITUTE SERIOUS DANGER TO AMERICAN INTERESTS.

HELMS

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